

PRISON REFORM.

"A Yellow Streak," Says An Old Convict

"ALONG THEIR SPINAL COLUMN"

The Solution by a "Professional Criminal" of the Problem Discussed Last Week—Selections of Prison Poetry by Life Prisoners Exclusively, Some of Whom are Now at Liberty—A Life Story.

(The writer of the following was sentenced to life imprisonment in the Ohio Penitentiary for fighting a street fight. Pardoned after eight years imprisonment, he proposes in the columns of the Globe to tell "a plain, unvarnished tale" of life in a modern penitentiary.—EDITOR.)

An old-time convict, one who had "done his bit" in half a dozen different State penitentiaries, in commenting on the problem of the superior loyalty of the "professional" prisoner's wife over that of the "accidental" criminal's, got off the following, which, by the way, as editor of the prison paper, we put quietly to sleep in the waste basket, and only now give its substance from memory:

"There is a yellow streak, which extends the full length of the spinal column of the wife of an accidental prisoner. This streak is 'selfishness.' She married her man to be petted, taken care of, and kept in luxury. When her man falls, and he can no longer contribute to her ease and selfishness, she resents it as a terrible grievance, and soon begins to 'cool off' towards him. In a little while as she broods over her new troubles of having to hustle a little, she begins to hate the husband who caused her all this trouble. Her kindfolk, acquaintances, and the society in which she moves all encourage her in these feelings. Her man is absent, and the magnetism of his presence to argue, convince, or soothe her are lost, and his enemies as well as his friends assist in their work, and he is doomed. She either quietly separates herself from him in spirit and person, or, if she is still young, obtains a divorce, and gets another man, for man she must have as she is incapable of taking care of herself, and too selfish to make any sacrifice for the man she stood up with at the altar, and promised to 'love, honor and obey, for better or worse, until death.'

As the decent, so-called wife of the 'accidental' criminal has a streak of yellow, so the real criminal's wife, or woman, has a streak of 'gameiness,' or unselfishness, which carries her through. She hates the authorities, the police and the officials equally as intensely as her husband or man, and looks upon the latter, no matter what he does in the way of crime, as a victim of the law. Then, again, there is no whining among us professionalists. We philosophically take our imprisonment as one of the expected hardships in our 'public' careers. We do not pour tales of woe into the ears of our women when they visit us, nor do they into ours, nor do we regret our crimes. We've been unlucky in getting jugged in the stir, better luck next time," etc.

Passing from this troublesome problem which each has to solve for himself when the time comes, the writer only desires to state as a wind up to the subject that he was the only life prisoner confined, his length of time (eight years) whose wife didn't divorce him.

As a variety to the probably tedious narrative characterized in the past three or four issues, we this week propose to give specimens of the "prison poetry" contributed to the Prison News. They are mainly the productions of life prisoners, or "accidental" criminals, whose one crime consigned them to the fearful fate of imprisonment during their natural lives, unless pardoned by the governor, and if all the chief executives of Ohio were like the present incumbent, Hon. George Nash, the Ohio penitentiary would be the grave of the hundreds now at liberty through the clemency extended them by his predecessors. Even on July 4th last, Governor Nash refused to pardon the time-worn custom of extending a pardon to one of the unfortunate, many of whom have served from ten to twenty-five years behind the walls.

The following verses were contributed by an educated Irishman, whose life imprisonment was happily and deservedly terminated by Governor Bushnell, and who, as a matter of fact, evidence and history ought not to have served a single hour of imprisonment:

As autumn leaves are falling fast,
And woods are brown and bare,
I, grieving, brood of days long past,
And pine in sorrow here.
The ivied ruins, the castles old,
The green hills where they stand—
What scenes these fading eyes behold
In thee, dear native land!

The changeable dome of Irish skies,
The landscape's emerald sheen,
The sacred fane, the hallowed ties,
The glories that have been;
The sloping banks, the crystal streams,
The peaceful, flower-decked vale,
In exile's soft and pensive dreams
My native land I wail!

When first my infant eyes beheld
Thy mountains and thy sea,
My ravished soul thou captive held
And still 'tis chained to thee.
Though genial clime or generous race
Extend the welcome hand
On hearts that feel man's nature trace
The love of native land.

The hawthorn hedge, the rural calm
Of embowered winding lanes—
I feel again thy perfumed balm,
Though crime my manhood stains.
But crime, or sin, or fateful chance
What'er they name the "brand"—
Grant thou, O Lord! this last fond glance
Rest on my native land.

Here is another from a life prisoner, who was also subsequently pardoned:
Hail, Mother, full of grace thou art,
And sainted member now
O, heaven's hosts, no trials of earth
Can cloud thy beaming brow.
Hail Mother, blest with angels bright,
I feel thy loved embrace.
Thy spirit in the silent night
Oft kiss my furrowed face.
To childhood's scenes thy shade be-
guiles;

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MENELEK, KING OF ABYSSINIA

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Abyssinia has an interesting history, and is an interesting country. The emperors call themselves princes of Tigre, and claim direct descent from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. The population of Abyssinia has been estimated at 3,000,000. The bulk of the people belong to the Caucasian race, and its features do not differ from the Bedouin Arabs. Another race is mingled with those more resembling the negroes. There is also a third race called Gallas. In Gondar is the purest type of Abyssinians. Of the manners of the people there are conflicting stories. Bruce, the traveler, describes a feast of the higher class in which a bull or cow is brought to the door; the feet are tied; the skin is stripped off the hindquarters, and the flesh is cut from the buttocks in solid square pieces and eaten raw. That the Abyssinians eat raw flesh occasionally has been proved by Pearce, who once saw some brutal soldiers, on a marauding expedition, while driving a cow, cut steaks from the hump, which the devoted raw to satisfy their craving hunger. The animal was then driven to the camp and killed. But Europeans who have lived for years in Tigre have seen none of the indecencies and grossness which Bruce portrays. Intoxication, however, is common at feasts.

Abyssinians even now are not without their authors and painters, and they are generally fond of pictures, with which they line the inside of their churches and decorate their chief apartments.

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The fair at Antala is held every Wednesday. All the inhabitants within twenty miles then congregate at Antala to dispose of their grain, vegetables, bullocks and other products, returning with bricks of salt, which are the current coin of the realm.

In Abyssinia they have a delightful mode of finding out a thief. A traveler gives information on this point: "It is very noticeable the mode adopted for the detection of thieves. The thief catcher is much feared, and belongs to the servants of the State. When the thief has been committed, the sufferer gives information to this official, upon which he sends his servant a certain dose of black meal compounded with milk, on which he makes him smoke tobacco. The servant is thrown into a state of frenzy, in which state he goes from house to house, crawling on his hands and feet like one out of his mind. After he has smelt about a number of houses—his master all the time holding him by a cord fastened around the body—he goes at last into a house, lays on its owner's bed and sleeps for a time. . . . master then arouses him with blows, and he awakes and arrests the owner of the house, who is forthwith dragged before the priests, and they make the victim of the robbery swear that he will not assess more than the real value of the article stolen. The person into whose house the entry is made is regarded as the thief, and is forced to pay, whether he is innocent or guilty. No wonder that the population trembles when the thief catcher is seen in the streets, and that everybody tries to be on good terms with him, as there is no saying when he will make his appearance in the house."

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The native captives were formed in line before the quarters of the imprisoned Europeans. King Theodoros arrayed himself in his state robes and donned his imperial crown, and rode to where the captives stood in two parallel lines, surrounded by his soldiers. After dismounting, the King walked backward, up and down the line, eyeing the victims sternly, and a sort of barbaric majesty provided every motion. Seemingly satisfied with his inspection, he strode quickly and nervously to the center of the line, and impatiently throwing his shawl over his left shoulder and pushing his crown from his brow backward, prob-

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Then, turning to his soldiers, he ordered them to separate those whom he named, and after ninety men, women and boys had been separated from the rest, cocking his pistol, he shouted out: "Now, who shall I first destroy?"

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"No," returned Theodoros, with increasing warmth in his countenance; "you tried to betray me to my enemies; spy and traitor, you shall be food for the jackals tonight. On the heads of all those who have compassed me about, the mischief of their own lips shall curse them. Let them be cast into the fire, into the deep pit, that they rise not again. Strip these fellows," he said, "that they may behold each other's shame, and give me their exact number."

Their zugs were torn from them, and each man, woman, and boy stood before him naked. The number of those he had ordered for execution was 308—275 men, 50 women, and 28 boys. He then said: "Spear the Galla dog, Ingerta. Spear him, I say!"

And Ras Ourary Earie, ever ready to obey Theodoros, leveled a spear and flung it at Ingerta's breast. "Thou hast done well," said the King, as he saw the weapon had gone deep into his bosom; but Ras Ingerta plucked it out of the wound, and flung it contemptuously at Theodoros' feet. "Another one!" shouted Theodoros, "spear him again, and several chiefs immediately sank their weapons in his body."

The wounded chief stood up bravely, and drew them out one after another, the blood spurting from his wounds in crimson streams, when he fell down and died.

Impatient at the slow progress of the execution, the King shot one dead with his own hand, and, throwing his revolver away, he drew his big sword and leaped toward the trembling prisoners. Eying them a moment, he seemed to choose one for whom he entertained a perfect hatred, for he said to him: "Ah, your hour has come. I am going to drink your blood," and, raising his sword, he cut off his head at one blow, and then drew it across his abdomen. Theodoros' face and clothes were covered with blood, and like a tiger who has tasted blood, this seemed to increase his fury. He foamed at his lips, and his eyes became bloodshot. After stabbing and cutting about fifty with his own hand, he rested, and ordered that his chiefs should try their hands. Many of them had personal hatred against their captives, and they proceeded with astonishing alacrity with the awful task of massacre. Whenever he witnessed dexterous blows, Theodoros applauded, but when he saw cuts given that but naimed the poor wretches, the King would spring up and demonstrate what an easy matter it was to send a head clean off the shoulders, by choosing a strong, sturdy prisoner, and decapitating him with his own hands.

Despite the somewhat gloomy tone of the anecdote told by Stuart Robson one night between the acts of "Oliver Goldsmith," last season, it demonstrated the calm assurance of the genius of the dramatist.

"Once while Booth, Barrett and I were talking," said Robson, "the conversation turned on 'deadheads.' I had just finished.

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